

Why Insights are Key to Building your Strategic Value

Autumn 2024



Supported by

evaluagent 

Financial Services Leadership Forum

The Leadership Series is the documented output from the CCMA's series of Leadership Forum meetings. These take place at the House of Lords and provide an exclusive opportunity for senior contact centre leaders to explore the key factors driving change in their industry - and to consider how to continue innovating and adding value for the benefit of the customer, colleagues, and the business.

Financial Services Leadership Forum attendees:

- Sarah Card, Head of Delivery & Risk, Marcus by Goldman Sachs
- Michelle Dinsmore, Chief Operating Officer, EvaluAgent
- David Fearn, Digital Operations Manager, TSB
- Sean Gilholme, Head of Customer Service, Atom Bank
- Tom Haynes, Head of Telephony Operations, HSBC
- Kate Law, Membership and Learning Director, CCMA
- Amanda McCormack, Head of Risk & Control Direct, AIB
- Vicki Mercer, Head of Customer Service, CAF Bank
- Ben O'Donegan, CICC Senior Insight Manager, Santander
- Lisa Range, Chief Commercial Officer, Tyl by NatWest
- Rula Samara, Head of Customer Service, Novuna Consumer Finance
- Lucinda Scott, Director of Customer Service, First Direct
- Kelly Shippen, Head of Contact Centre, Leeds Building Society
- Chrissie Spencer, Head of Partnerships, CCMA
- Rachael Titterton, Director of Operations, Zopa Bank





The CCMA’s Memberships and Learning Director, Kate Law, introduced the latest Financial Services Leadership Forum by asking attendees how they were using their valuable data to unlock greater investment opportunities, and whether this could ultimately translate into business successes such as increasing lifetime value. Kate also wondered if customer service leaders in the financial services sector were promoting the work of their contact centres to the board successfully, and whether these efforts were shifting perceptions as to the value that the contact centre can bring to the business.

Contact centres always used to be seen as cost centres – is that still the case?

AIB’s Amanda McCormack recalls that: “in particular, since Covid, leaders acknowledge the important role the contact centre plays in capturing customer sentiment. Now we get different parts of the business to visit us each week, and there’s much greater recognition.” Sarah Card at Marcus by Goldman Sachs felt the same, saying “we’ve seen much more focus and interest in what we’re doing in the contact centre and the outcomes of our customers.”

Lisa Range at Tyl by NatWest has experienced similar strong support. “Our new CEO used to be a Chief Product Officer and is really interested in the role the contact centre plays. We increased our profile during Covid, and that increased awareness is still reflected through our board’s ongoing attention and interest.”

Kelly Shippen from Leeds Building Society agrees: “with Consumer Duty we’re seeing the customer focus changing in a good way. Our Chair makes a point of visiting the contact centre regularly, and we make a real effort to showcase senior executives spending a day with us. This means they get to see how we’re busy increasing value for the Society.” Santander’s Ben O’Donagan highlighted the important work that contact centre teams did in helping to increase customer value by building stronger relationships. “However, we do need to also recognise that we all do have customers that are a cost to business – and our contact centres have to deal with them too.”

Novuna Consumer Finance’s Rula Samara felt that she still needed to work hard to convince the firm’s more traditional Japanese ownership to look beyond cost centre thinking. “There’s a lot of focus on AI digital transformation, and that means we need to communicate strongly to board members that we’re not a cost to the business by evidencing how we’re busy preventing problems and mitigating risk.” For Atom Bank’s Sean Gilholme this was much less of an issue. “Atom Bank’s strategy has always been to encourage self-serve, with the prioritisation of digital service. But it’s never felt like a battle – we’ve always had a loud voice in the change agenda.”

What do things look and feel like in terms of metrics?

In raising the issue of contact centre metrics, Kate recognised that “leadership teams were faced with layer of

data upon data, but which ones were proving most useful?" Sara felt that it was always important to question what you were seeing. "Which way round should we look at this? SLAs may be green, but does anyone ever question them? Do they always reflect what good outcomes look like? Take AHT, for example, we don't track it for our people, and we find that calls actually end up being shorter when you take that focus away." Sean Gilholme from Atom Bank felt the same way: "if you look at your ten best agents you'll find that all of them will be operating under planned AHT levels."

David Fearn from TSB agreed. "We've only just recently stopped using AHT as a core metric, when we finally realised that it didn't fix the problem. We're now focused on our NPS results, but we also recognise that processes have to be set up right to truly reflect what's going on, as NPS is based on the experience with the last person a customer might have dealt with." Lisa added: "it's important to align with the metrics that your leaders use, but they also need to be introduced to some of our more specific customer service metrics before they really grasp their importance."

For Santander, Ben said they look at AHT when it comes to identifying potential anomalies, but not as a core metric. "Instead we focus on NPS, Abandon Rates and Call Demand. We're always looking to see whether the initiatives we're working on are driving demand into the areas we want them to." HSBC's Tom Haynes saw NPS as "a good tool to help in ensuring we are providing great experiences, particularly when considering how we demonstrate good customer outcomes under Consumer Duty requirements."

At First Direct, Director of Service Lucinda Scott is always looking for those areas where you can be best next. "Redials provide a good indicator – if people keep getting back in touch something has gone wrong in the journey. We're also serious about closing down any issues. Our CEO makes calls every Monday night. It's important that we don't become complacent, and this way our CEO never gets too far away from what our customers are feeling."

Rachael Titterton said the board were really interested in product design. "We're always tracking how customers are using our app and why they need to get in touch with us. We take these insights, our answer rate metrics, and our quality and CSAT scores to really focus in on how we can improve our product." Sarah added that "the contact centre used to be the only voice of the customer. However, insights

gathered by product teams are becoming much more significant."

Sean agreed. "We're seeing successful product releases as a key contributor to good CSAT, and we're increasingly looking at our contact propositions through an application development or a product development lens. This also means that we're able to collect customer input from a range of different data points."

How do we get business cases through now?

Kate then asked how contact centre and CX leaders could establish the importance of voice of the customer at the board level in order to help drive through business cases when needed. According to Rula: "the board at Novuna Consumer Finance is really interested in driving innovation across the CX space, and we've introduced a Bright Ideas Scheme that amplifies the voice of advisors and sees them sharing ideas drawn from their own processes."

Tom says: "at HSBC we're having discussions that reach across many different arms of the CX space, whether that's digital, voice, chat, branch or relationship marketing activities. It's no longer as simple as driving more demand to digital. If there's a strong case to grow FTE in specific areas, then that's great if that's what's needed."

"We're part of a global organisation, so our team is always looking at best practice from around the world. For example, I chair a customer forum each quarter with the CEO, where we focus in on NPS levels, analyse complaints, and look hard at what we need to do to delight the customer," explained Lucinda. "When talking about business cases we also need to think beyond just technology. With more and more people self-serving, contact centre employees are having to deal with more complex questions from customers. This requires more in-depth ability, so we also need to be thinking in terms of how we continue to upskill our people."

Ben emphasised the benefits of simpler projects, suggesting that it was hard to beat those smaller project investments that delivered



multiple benefits. He also advised that “there’s not enough money for everything, so business cases need to be as robust as possible. Sometimes priorities don’t work in your favour, so it’s important to keep communication open and explain to project champions why their initiative didn’t win the funding it needed.”

Kelly Shippen added that there were also potential issues with projects that did get the go ahead. “We’re working on a major core systems replacement at the moment, so our capacity to do anything in addition is minimal. It’s a multi-year transition, so we’re learning to think in terms of ‘bridging the gap’ or understanding the gulf between what we want and what we can have. This means we really have to focus in on what’s good for the customer, and also pick the right times!”

How can the contact centre get even more priority?

So what else can customer service leadership do to ensure that their contact centre operations continue to capture board attention? Tom notes that “the contact centre is front and centre now, with organisations keen to explore new technologies such as AI, unlock the potential of the latest CCaaS platforms, and also commit to increased personalisation activities.”

“There’s so many opportunities for change and, from a commercial perspective, businesses can only focus on a few of these at any one time,” added Sean. “That’s why it’s important that leadership really understands the factors that are driving their decision.” Lucinda echoes this, emphasising that “there’s real commercial value in delivering excellent customer service. It directly impacts brand reputation, and the likelihood that when people talk about your business in the pub they’ll be doing it for the right reasons. Achieving excellence in customer service is very difficult to deliver without your contact centre being on point.”

How does your strategic corporate direction get reflected in your customer roadmaps?

Given the discussion around how important it was for customer service leaders to engage at board level, Kate then asked the Leadership Forum attendees what they

were doing to ensure strategic corporate goals were carried through into customer roadmaps.

“At Atom Bank we hold monthly business performance updates so that everyone understands the metrics that are on their scorecards, and why they matter,” said Sean. “We also record these sessions so that they are available to those people who can’t make the updates.” Sarah added that “SKIP meetings are a great way of making sure that messages are getting through. However, it’s easy to forget just how much information we’re expecting people to retain. If we can automate some of these processes then that would make things easier.” Tom agreed, saying: “it’s relentless for colleagues on calls, and almost impossible for them to read and absorb everything.”

Amanda McCormack highlighted the importance of making things relatable to job roles. “That’s especially important for complex regulatory issues. Advisors will pick up on issues that are important to their own roles.” Rachael shared how at Zopa Bank “we have weekly all-team meetings where we can cascade strategic messaging and follow up with 1:1s where needed.”

EvaluAgent’s Michelle Dinsmore added: “some people are more motivated to learn knowledge than others, so it’s important to zero in on the elements that they really need to do their own jobs well. AI tools like Agent Assist have an important role to play here.”



Has AI started to have a significant impact on customer service delivery?

Kate asked how people were progressing with AI-enabled solutions, and Rula mentioned that they had just deployed Agent Assist at Novuna Consumer Finance. *“So far our agents absolutely love it, and we’re taking advantage of knowledge management, auto wrap-up, and speech/text capture. We’re not 100% there yet, and it would be great if we could work towards auto soft skills, but we’re only really at the start of the process. There are complexities though, particularly around the MI part. For example, where exactly is the best point to capture data along an AI-enabled customer journey as this all has implications for grade of service.”*

In terms of automation, Amanda said AIB have brought in AutoQM and speech analytics. *“We’re able to highlight the top trends coming through, and with really strong data and analytics we can gain a sense of exactly why customers are calling. We’ve also built our own notes capability that we can reference should someone then complain within six months of their original call.”*

Sometimes though, the benefits can come from taking away rather than adding to the customer service mix. At Leeds Building Society, for example, Kelly has just stopped the creation of notes after calls. *“We tried a QA notes process that didn’t work for us, and we actually started to question the whole use of post-call notes. After consideration, we decided to try not doing them at all – except for critical areas such as complaints and vulnerability. The results have been highly impressive, saving us around 60 seconds a call on average –*



that’s equivalent to 10% of our overall resource. Customers don’t seem to mind, in fact complaints have gone down!”

Do you still have a dedicated QA team?

Kate then asked whether Leadership Forum attendees still had dedicated QA teams, and if they were seeing an increased use of automation in this area. Rachael said: *“we want it to be automated, but we’re not there yet. It’s also still really important that there’s some independence in the process, so that we can focus on where the problem areas are.”*

AIB’s Amanda added: *“AQM will listen to 100% of our calls, helping us to identify where performance has been really good and also highlight coaching where needed. We support this with independent call evaluations, ensuring that we’re covered from a risk perspective.”* Lisa also acknowledged the need for independence in the QA process. Lucinda agreed, saying that *“managers still need to be responsible for quality, so you’ve got to listen to calls – indeed the more independence there is, the better the results.”*

However, not everyone felt automated QA was the right approach. Rula maintains a 22-strong centralised QA team at Novuna Consumer Finance. *“We’re evolving to digital, but we still see our most complex discussions coming through the phone, so we focus our QA efforts on helping our agents to deliver an improved performance.”*

evaluagent’s Michelle Dinsmore highlighted that the potential of automated QA is often underestimated. *“It’s not just about increasing coverage. Automated QA can surface the most impactful interactions across every channel. That then reveals strategic insights that can go beyond the contact centre, into other areas such as digital transformation, product or marketing teams.”*

About the CCMA

For more than 30 years, the CCMA has been absolutely dedicated to supporting contact centre professionals. We're constantly pushing ourselves to do more for our thriving community, which happens to be the largest community of contact centre professionals in the UK. The CCMA was founded with the goal of sharing best practice and networking to improve skills and knowledge in order to progress contact centre operations - and we live by that to this day.

We give those that work in contact centres the chance to discuss ideas and share experiences through member-only Special Interest Groups and online and in-person events.

Members are invited to become Accredited through the Contact Centre Standards Framework and get independent guidance on where to focus for improvements. There is also the opportunity to benchmark the operation against 25+ KPIs.

The CCMA Academy gives everyone a structured learning opportunity to support both personal and professional development for the benefit of their operation.

And of course, we celebrate the progress our industry is making through the UK National Contact Centres Awards. Those that win go on to share their stories through channels such as the UK National Contact Centre Conference, Best Practice Visits and CareerTalk. They are invited to input into the Special Interest Groups and other events.

www.ccma.org.uk

About EvaluAgent

Created by contact centre experts with decades of experience on the frontlines, evaluagent has been helping contact centres across the globe dramatically improve their Quality Assurance capabilities.

Our award-winning platform, evaluagentCX, is the only platform to seamlessly connect out-of-the-box, customizable and AI-driven insights from 100% of conversations to automated Quality Assurance and agent improvement.

evaluagentCX helps busy contact centre teams laser-focus QA efforts on the must-monitor interactions, acting as a QA co-pilot to deliver time and process efficiencies and enable rapid and measurable agent performance improvements. Agents are the heart of the contact centre and are truly supported by our platform, with coaching, learning and gamification features that empower them to be an active participant in their own development.

Trusted by leading global organisations, evaluagent is positioned to help contact centres of all sizes elevate their QA approach, transforming both the customer and employee experience.

www.evaluagent.com



0333 939 9964

www.ccma.org.uk

info@ccma.org.uk